Mr. Browne, surveyor of the Greenwich district, made a complaint against Mr. James Williams for a certain alleged illegal "projection of a shop-front, and cellar-flap and way," but having omitted to state all the grounds and particulars of his objection, and the particular parts of the new Act to which the said works were not conformable, he was advised, by the official referees, to do this "by means of a drawing, sketch, or outline, with explanatory observations." The following is then added, and as it is highly important to all classes to know that the referees never intend to make a survey, *without charging for it*, we reprint it at length:—

"You will at once perceive, that it is of importance that the parties who make a complaint, or refer a matter to the official referees for their determination, should state the complaint, or the matter referred, with a fair degree of certainty, in order that they may be enabled to judge of it without the expense of a personal survey, which may be avoided, and in order that the opposing party may be fairly informed of the subject-matter of the complaint or reference." The letter concludes with a little wholesome advice to Mr. Browne not to interfere in an irregular manner.

The same gentleman also made a complaint against Mr. John Hiscock, for an irregular projection before a line of houses, but it was referred back to him for the "grounds and particulars of his objection," as in the last case.

Mr. Badger, of Lewisham, complained of Mr. John Godwin, for erecting some cottages contrary to the Act, but as the buildings in question were carried up to a considerable height before the 1st inst., they were deemed by the official referees to be "already built," and not within the operation of the Act. Mr. Badger imagined that as they were being built by contract they came within the meaning of the 9th section, which directs such contracts to be so modified that all buildings may be erected according to the provisions of the Act, but this of course only applies to buildings commenced *since* the 1st of January.

Mr. Sibley, of Clerkenwell, having mixed up with his return of buildings in progress on the 1st inst., an allusion to the dangerous state of St. John's Gate, erected several hundred years ago, representing that the decaying stone fell on the public way, received a request that his communications might be made "formally in future," and directions that he would make a survey of the building, with a view to its repair, under the 40th section. Mr. Sibley, we believe, has not yet made his report, and until then the official referees cannot take any steps for the abatement of the danger.

Mr. Baker, of St. Pancras, likewise received authority from the official referees to survey the scene of the late calamitous fire in Guildford-street, they having received information from another party that the walls were in a dangerous state. The case being urgent, Mr. Baker lost no time in serving the notice required by the 24th section upon Mr. Farey, the lease-holder; he was accompanied in his survey by that gentleman's son, who so narrowly escaped from the fire, and the report and certificate were at once drawn up and transmitted to the registrar. The purport was, that a hoard would be useless, as the front of the house might be blown down right across the street, but that it was necessary, for the safety of the public, immediately to pull down the front as low as the stone balcony, inclusive, and also the rear-front to the level of the ground-floor, shoring up the walls which would be left standing. The official referees have to send a copy of such certificate to the overseers of the poor, and the latter again have to write to the owner of the building to repair or pull down "within fourteen days."

The whole regulations respecting ruinous buildings seem rather complicated. The 40th section takes the matter in hand, but instead of giving some simple directions, refers to the 24th section, which is a mass of regulations about the survey and condemnation of party-walls, and contains a form of notice which is not strictly applicable in both cases. Time will, however, simplify these points.

In another part of the journal we present in a tabular form a list of all the district surveyors and their offices, the names and address of the official referees and registrar, and an abstract of those portions of the Act which relate to the notices required from builders.

INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.

JANUARY 14, 1845.—The President in the chair.

The first meeting of the session of 1845 took place on Tuesday evening, the 14th inst. We noticed that some further improvements had been effected in the comfort and decorations of the rooms of the society. The collection of portraits has been augmented by that of Mr. Walker (the president), which was painted by J. P. Knight, R.A., last year for the members of the institution. The model gallery has also received some interesting additions.

The first paper read was on the different modes of confining railway bars in their chairs, by Mr. W. H. Barlow, resident engineer on the Midland Counties Railway. Of the numerous methods which have been tried for keying the rails in the chairs, it would appear that the one now most generally practised is that of parallel compressed wooden keys, but even to these Mr. Barlow states several objections, which, in his opinion, counterbalance the advantage of their elasticity and tendency to assume their original dimensions when exposed in a damp atmosphere. Being of small dimensions and placed just at the surface of the ballast, they decay rapidly; they swell and shrink with every change of temperature, thus becoming loose in dry weather, and requiring constant driving up, which soon destroys them. On the Midland Counties Railway the duration of the wooden joint keys has not exceeded five years, and at the present price of compressed keys, which varies from 8*l.* to 12*l.* per thousand, the expense of renewal of keys per mile per annum at the latter rate would be 10*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* for a line with 3 feet bearings, and 8*l.* 0*s.* with 3 feet 9 inches bearings. This induced Mr. Barlow to try hollow wrought-iron keys made like the Russel gas-tube, but of such a form as to bear equally against the jaw of the chair, the middle web of the rail, and the top and bottom flanches. This form and substance it has been found gave great stability, held the rails firmly in their places, and yet possessed such elasticity as to neutralize the effect of the travelling of the wheels over the chairs, and rendered the motion of the carriages peculiarly smooth and agreeable. A number of experiments were given, wherein the great superiority of these keys, in their inherent qualities and their cost, over all other kinds was satisfactorily shewn. They have now been used for a considerable period on the Midland Counties, the South-Eastern, the Warwick and Leamington, and other railways; and in the discussion which ensued, several engineers expressed themselves so well pleased with them, that they intended to introduce them in all their new works.

A paper, by Mr. John Storey, described an oblique bridge of freestone over the river Gaunless, on the Hagger Leases Branch Railway. This bridge is remarkable for the acute angle (27°) which it forms with the line of the river it spans; and from its having been built so long ago as the year 1839, when that kind of construction was but imperfectly understood and but little practised in England, the square section of the arch is 19 feet, while the length of the face of the arch, in consequence of its extreme obliquity, is 42 feet. The paper described the mode of setting out the work and of executing the masonry; they were not so theoretically correct as the methods now practised, but the practical effects were stated to be good, as after the centres were struck, the crown of the arch did not drop half an inch, and no subsidence has been since observed in any part of the work.

The meeting was adjourned until the 21st instant, when the annual general meeting will be held for the election of the council and officers for the ensuing session. A considerable change is contemplated.

PURE OIL FOR MACHINERY.—Owing to the impurities which oils contain in their natural state, such as mucus, or albumen, and which act like yeast in promoting chemical action, most of them, when kept, become rancid. To obviate the difficulty this causes to philosophical instrument-makers and engineers, Messrs. Lundholm and Co. have produced a new oil, called pure Elaine, which seems worthy of trial.

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

ON Monday evening, the 13th instant, the Institute met in their new rooms for the first time, George Smith, Esq., vice-president, in the chair. Thanks were voted to Messrs. Mair, Scoles, and Thompson, and to the honorary secretaries, for their services in effecting the removal. Mr. C. N. Cumberlege was elected a fellow, and Messrs. Henry Peet and Edward F. Hutchins associates. The foreign secretary read an extract from a letter stating that the King of Prussia had purchased all the drawings and papers left by Schinkel, in order to preserve them intact.

Mr. Donaldson then laid before the meeting a brief view of the history of architecture, from the building of Babel, assumed to be 2249 years B.C., to the revival of Italian architecture in the 16th century, illustrated by a beautiful series of drawings. The chief object of the lecture was to point out the connection which existed between the architecture of the various countries of antiquity. Egypt, Greece, Italy, and Byzantium were each alluded to, and the rise of Christian architecture pointed out. The lecturer considered that the pointed arch came to us from the Saracens, and read some extracts from M. Guizot's "History of Civilization in Europe," to shew the effect of the crusades on arts and manners in this quarter of the globe.

Some clever sketches of Athenian and other Greek monuments, recently made by Mr. George Knowles, were exhibited; and a coloured copy of Mr. Lewis Gruner's elaborate work on the fresco decorations and stuccoes of buildings in Italy.

SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES.

AT a meeting of this society, held on Thursday, the 9th instant, Mr. Henry Hallam, the historian, in the chair, Mr. Albert Way exhibited an ancient altar-cloth from Steeple Aston Church, Oxon. A letter from M. de Gaumont, of Normandy, was read, soliciting subscriptions for a statue of William the Conqueror, proposed to be erected at Falaise, the place of his birth. The letter also stated that the French antiquaries would hold their annual congress at Lille in July next, and expressed a hope that they might be favoured with the presence of some members of the society.

A communication from Mr. Edward Richardson was read, describing a number of coffins, stone and lead, found in the circular part of the Temple Church, London. The lead coffins were attributed to the time of Henry III., the stone coffins might be earlier. An account of Old Sarum, by Mr. Hatcher, illustrated by a model, was also read.

We have received several communications complaining of the apathy which prevails in this ancient and respected society, and the little good it effects as compared with its powerful means and influential position. The chief cause of the evil seems to be, that its management is allowed to rest exclusively with a few individuals (excellent though they may be), and has become a mere matter of routine.

THE "STATUE OF WILLIAM IV."—The commemoration of the erection and inauguration of the statue of the "Sailor King," which has just been completed by Mr. Samuel Nixon, and is now placed on a pedestal at the termination of King William-street, at the point which faces London-bridge, was celebrated a few evenings since at the Adelaide Tavern, at the foot of the bridge, where, at six o'clock, a numerous assembly of the influential gentlemen of the wards of Bridge and Candlewick sat down to an excellent dinner. The chair was filled by Sir Chapman Marshall, who was supported on the right hand by Sir George Carroll (these two gentlemen being the aldermen of the respective wards), and on his left by Mr. Nixon. We are sorry that we cannot coincide in the flattering opinions of the statue which have been expressed. It is, to us, coarse and clumsy, and not likely to advance the reputation of the sculptor.

ROYAL ACADEMY.—Every academician was entitled to exhibit eight pictures each season, and for which, of course, the best places were retained. By a recent resolution they have now limited themselves to six. This alteration cannot fail to be gratefully received by the profession generally.

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